

Getting a Dog? How to Choose a Perfect Match for Your Family

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The pluses for getting a dog or puppy are far more fulfilling than the minuses. You have unconditional love for the rest of both your lives. You have a constant companion who loves you no matter what. They love you when you stink or if you are in a bad mood, even when having a bad hair day they still look at you like you're their bit of heaven. NO ONE loves you unconditionally except God; remember, dog is God spelled backwards.

You have to prepare yourself for adoption by researching which breed is right for your lifestyle and your personality.

You have to ask yourself these questions:

1. How active or inactive am I and can my dog keep up or can I keep up with the dog?
2. How much time can I spend with the dog?
3. Is my environment large enough for a dog to live in? Does this dog need a small or large yard or does it even want to go outside at all?
4. Can I afford a dog, its dog food, yearly vaccines, vet bills and grooming if necessary?
5. Am I willing to change my life and routine to care for the dog and take the time to train and socialize the dog so it can be a life-long companion?
6. Will this dog be tolerant of my children and are my children at an age that they can interact properly with a dog and not annoy it.

These are just a few questions you should ask yourself:

If you are looking for a dog to keep up with your active life you might want a breed that is bred for all day long endurance.

High energy breeds need a lot of exercise and attention. Some can be high maintenance; you must make time to socialize, exercise and train your dog. You will become their mother/father, best friend and their teacher. If you have time for all that is needed, then a high energy dog can be perfect for your busy lifestyle. If your lifestyle is very active and you are considering a Shi Tzu you might want to think twice. If you are a couch potato in an apartment and are thinking of a Border Collie you might as well just go ahead and shoot yourself in the foot now and get it over with.

Here are some good matches for active outdoorsy people.

Labrador and Golden retrievers are great dogs and were bred to be around hunters and they take direction from humans very well. They have an abundance of energy and do well in an active environment. These breeds definitely need a fenced-in yard. They have to be able to run and exercise on a regular basis. They can be very rambunctious and overwhelming for small children if not properly exercised. Check out the Labrador and Golden Retriever rescue groups. This is a great way to save a dog's life and to get a pure bred in the process. Rescue dogs in my opinion make the best pets; for some reason they seem to know they have been rescued and return the favor by rescuing you from a boring ho-hum life.

A few other high-energy breeds that are good with kids some can be too exuberant for toddlers and great companions for your family are:

Setters, Spaniels, Retrievers, Collies, Weimaraners, Shepherd, Jack Russell Terriers and Corgis just to name a few. There are rescue groups for all breeds and I strongly suggest rescuing a dog versus buying one if at all possible.

Now if you're a couch potato or a homebody I suggest looking into some of the more laid-back breeds that really do not care to get their royal manes dirty, like a Pekingese, Pug or Shih Tzu, just to name a few. Most of these guys will adapt their energy level to their environment. The smaller breeds are more adaptable to apartment and inner city living than some of the larger breeds that will take up and need more space.

I have adopted dogs from rescue organizations all my life and it has been my experienced that the MUTTS I have adopted have been the best dogs I ever had. Their temperament and health seemed to be better than the pure breeds that came into my family. Mutts are truly my favorite.

There are plenty of rescue groups out there that would be more than happy to help you find your new family member. Do your homework and be prepared for adoption; that is your duty as a human. It is a huge responsibility and it requires your commitment for the rest of the dog's life.

It is a proven fact that dogs can make you live longer. People that have pets are less stressed out and have less anxiety than others. Dogs are like wet cement in that whatever touches them leaves an impression. My favorite quote is from M. Gandhi "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

Local rescue organizations can help you find a perfect match for your family. Please visit PetFinder.com to find rescues in your area. You can also look up animal rescue groups in Google and type in the specific breed you are looking for and so many will come up, you're bound to find exactly what your heart desires.

Short note about the author

Susie Aga is a Certified Canine Behavior & Training Specialist who received her certification from Triple Crown Academy, a world leader in pet education. She has 20 years experience and is recommended by over 35 Veterinarians in the Metro Atlanta Area. Susie was chosen by Turner Broadcasting to be their featured Pet Expert.
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